Out of Touch/Out of Time

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Out of Touch/Out of Time

by sourweather

Summary

Will and Hannibal's relationship has been growing steadily, and Hannibal is more than willing to help his boyfriend cope with his sensory issues. However the stress brought on by Will's job is damaging his mental state.

Sequel to You Make Me Feel (Good). Starts about a month afterward.

Notes

Thank you so, so much to everyone who read or commented on You Make Me Feel (Good)!!! YOU are the reason this long ass fic exists lol, I've been wanting to write a sequel since I wrote it and I'm so thrilled that It resonated with people.

Special shout out to AO3 user Orion, who asked for a sequel <3 and to the lovely people in the passel who encouraged me while I fought with this fic for like 6 days lol <3<3<3

See the end of the work for more notes

Will grumbles into the pillows, closing his eyes tightly against the glaring sunlight through the curtains. He rolls, feeling blindly for the touch he's grown a bit too accustomed to over the past month. It's nowhere to be found. The sheets are still warm where he was, but all Will finds is more silky fabric. He frowns, still half-asleep. He doesn't like these sheets. They're too slippery, like hair conditioner or hand lotion. He shudders, shrugging the feeling away and rolling himself in the duvet so that his body is fully wrapped in its plush material. Much better.

He sighs, reluctantly opening his eyes. It's still pretty early, but he has a moment of panic before he remembers that it's Sunday. No classes, and he's not on an active case, for once. Nowhere to be. He forces himself out of bed and retrieves his jeans from where they'd been shed the night before.

Barely made it through the doorway. Shirt's probably downstairs somewhere.

Will pushes his sleep-tousled curls from his face, starting down the hall toward the kitchen.

Hannibal is at the stove, bacon sizzling away in a pan and filling the kitchen with its mouth-watering scent. Judging by the carton of locally sourced eggs and fresh tomatoes nearby, there are omelets in his future. Will smiles to himself, approaching him from behind. He wraps his arms around Hannibal's waist, hands settling on the front of his shirt. Hannibal always looks good, but damn, Will likes him casual. He appreciates the other man's eye for style, but the fabric of his suits often don't suit Will. They can be quite coarse, itchy and a bit too warm to lean on or fold his arms around. The fabric of this T-shirt, on the other hand is thick and soft, made for comfort rather than style. Will holds him close, and the material presses to his bare chest, Hannibal warm beneath it.

"Good morning," Hannibal purrs, remaining focused on the pan.

Will hums, pressing a kiss to the back of his neck. "I woke up and you were gone," he murmurs.

"I thought I would make us breakfast."

Will's hands drift downward, fingers ducking under the hem of the other man's shirt and making their lazy way back up his chest. Hannibal is firm, strong, thick chest hair parting under his touch. Will's kisses become more lingering, insistent as he mouths at the juncture of his neck and shoulder.

Hannibal chuckles softly. "Insatiable boy," he teases.

Will growls at the comment, one of his hands coming back down to grip at his hip. "I'm touch starved, right? I need more *physical intimacy* in my life." He takes Hannibal's earlobe in his mouth, worrying it between his teeth for a moment before releasing it. "You wouldn't deprive me of something I need, would you Doctor?"

Hannibal's breath catches, but he laughs. "So you are willing to accept my diagnosis if it means I will have sex with you whenever you want?" He prods.

The hand caressing his chest drifts to Hannibal's nipple, rolling it between his fingers. Will smirks when Hannibal arches into it. "I'm willing to swallow my pride."

Hannibal turns in Will's embrace, finally facing him. His smile is mischievous. "Entirely unnecessary. I would indulge you, regardless. But I'm pleased that you finally accept my assessment."

Will kisses Hannibal, savoring the feeling of lips on his own. It's difficult to deny, he feels closer to stability than he has in months since he and Hannibal started sleeping together. He's willing to admit that the doctor might've had a point. "Yeah yeah, you can diagnose me with whatever you want if it gets you back in bed."

Hannibal kisses him again, deeply, then swats him away. "Breakfast first, wicked thing," he scolds, but his grin takes away any actual threat.

Will relents, leaving the kitchen to find his shirt and returning for a cup of coffee. Will frowns when he takes a sip.

"Tastes weird," he says, mainly to himself.

"You don't like it?" Hannibal asks.

Will shrugs. "I didn't say that. I'm just not used to it. Sometimes new things take a while for me."

"I've given you much to acclimate to in a short time, haven't I?" Hannibal muses.

He leans back against the counter. "It's fine. I mean, I prefer staying at my house, but yours has its advantages. I like how quiet it is here. Your shower is way better." He hesitates, takes another sip of coffee. "You're here."

Hannibal looks up from the stove, smiling softly. Will returns it.

"So, you know. Pros and Cons."

Hannibal looks pleased. "I'm always willing to spend time with you in Wolf Trap, but I'm happy to see that you're attempting to expand your comfort zone, so to speak."

When they sit down for breakfast, Will steels his nerves. At home, he normally has his TV or radio on during meals. He'll have no such luck here. The same quiet that he ordinarily appreciates is suddenly a source of dread. He grits his teeth when Hannibal's fork touches the surface of his plate, gathering a mouthful of eggs. The gentle scrape feels like it echoes, makes Will think of the sensation of a fork grazing his teeth the wrong way. He feels a twitch creeping up the back of his neck.

"Everything alright, Will?"

Will sighs. It isn't a big deal, he's dealt with it plenty of times. He can deal with it again.

He glances up at Hannibal. The other man tilts his head, wearing a patient expression as always. Kind. Accommodating.

"I just...have a thing."

"A thing?" Hannibal echos, arching a brow.

Will nods stiffly. "About um, the sound of people eating. It's not a big deal. I'll be fine."

Hannibal barely blinks before he says "Say no more," and stands to gather his plate and coffee. "Come with me, we can eat in the study."

Will watches him leave the dining room, a bit shocked. "O-okay," he says, following his lead.

When Will enters the study, Hannibal has placed his breakfast on his desk. Will sets his own down across from it, gently moving a spare chair near the desk. He looks up when the sound of soft classical music fills the study, at a volume that is just distracting enough to fill the silence without making conversation overwhelming.

"I've considered playing music during meals before, actually," Hannibal says, moving away from his record player to join Will at the desk. "After all, I aim to stimulate the other four senses through my cooking already. Adding an auditory element to complement the mood of the dinner could be very atmospheric."

Will nods along, finally digging in to his breakfast. The sound of violins catches his mind when a lull forms in conversation, keeping him from getting distracted. The food is spectacular, as always, and Will feels like he can taste it more. "That could be interesting," he says. "And challenging, I imagine. Selecting the correct arrangement to go along with a dish sounds more difficult than knowing flavor pairings."

"Perhaps so. But I'm never one to shy away from a challenge." He looks at Will over the rim of his coffee cup, corners of his eyes crinkling with fondness. "I could move the record player into the dining room later today, if you prefer it like this."

Will feels himself blushing. "You don't have to do that for me."

"Nonsense. As I said, I've been interested in introducing music to the dining experience for some time. I've simply never had an excuse until now."

"Hannibal."

He looks up at Will, completely unbothered. "Yes, Will?"

Will swallows another objection, replacing it with a hesitant smile. "Thanks," he says. "For being so...flexible, with me."

Hannibal shrugs. "Strangers and people who do not understand can be forgiven, but in my opinion, anyone who knows about your sensitivity and does nothing to ease your discomfort

is unspeakably rude. There's no need to thank me for being an exception where I should be the rule."

Will's smile blooms into a grin, blush deepening. "Well, I appreciate it, regardless. You go beyond the bare minimum, don't think for a second that I don't see that."

Hannibal preens at the compliment but doesn't look up from his breakfast.

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"Will?"

He trembles, feeling like his arms might give out beneath him. It's hot in here, it's too hot. He bites his lip, eyes shut tightly.

"Breathe, Will."

Will sucks in a shaking breath, begging his head to catch up with his body. He wants this, he wants this *he wants this*.

"Relax, it's alright."

As Hannibal speaks, he lifts a hand to cup Will's cheek. Will knows it's meant to be grounding but it sets his already burning mind into a full blaze. The muscles in his neck spasm and he twitches, flinching away from his touch. Hannibal's hand falls away in an instant, voice softening even more.

"We can stop, darling. Please don't put yourself through this for my sake."

Will sighs sharply, pulling out and waiting for the world to stop spinning around him. He drops his head to let it fall against Hannibal's shoulder.

"I'm sorry," he huffs.

"It's alright." Hannibal shifts slightly, bringing his hand near Will's head. "May I?"

Will swallows, his heart pounding. He takes a slow breath before saying "Yeah. Yeah, I'm okay."

Hannibal's fingers gently make their way into Will's curls, massaging his scalp. Will starts to relax a bit. The feeling of Hannibal playing with his hair is almost always soothing to him, intimate but very pleasant.

Will kisses the skin beneath him, wishing this was easier. "I'm in control," he whispers, letting the familiar mantra re-center him.

"You are," Hannibal says. "We don't have to do this, you know."

"I know, Han, you've made that very clear."

He blows out a long breath. The two of them have made love many times before, but it was usually a mingling of mouths and hands, a simple act of giving or receiving. But this- Fuck, Will wants this. "I'm just...overwhelmed, that's all. N-not entirely in a good way."

"I am yours, Will. You have all the time in the world. Take as long as you need."

He leans into the touch, savors the words. *Yours. I am yours.* They soothe them from the inside, the way only Hannibal can.

Will lifts himself back up, bracing himself on his forearms. "I've never felt like this before," he says quietly, face hot for a thousand different reasons.

Hannibal tilts his head. "And how do you feel?"

Will leans close, kissing him and letting the heat between them simmer to a rolling boil before making his way down Hannibal's chest. "Like Icarus," he confesses into the darkness.

Hannibal sighs, parting his legs as Will begins to mouth at his thighs. "I don't want your wings to burn for me, Will."

Will rests his forehead against the other man's bent knee, taking a slow breath. He's calmer, now. "I'll build new ones, then, from stronger parts. Daedalus was a fool. I'm not."

He crawls back up the bed, hovering above Hannibal and pressing another feverish kiss to his lips.

"I only want this if you're going to enjoy it, darling," Hannibal says when they part.

"And if I enjoy it?" He prods, voice dropping low. "How badly do you want it then?"

Hannibal chuckles, tangling his fingers once more into his curls. "Madly."

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It was really only a matter of time before everything fell apart, crashing down around him. Good things rarely seem to last- not for Will Graham, anyway.

It was just bad timing, in hindsight. Just too many things at once. That's all it ever was.

Will's been in the head of a particularly elusive killer for ages now, walking not just a mile in their shoes but a marathon. It's weighing on him. This work always weighs on him. The nightmares had never really stopped, even when he felt better. Now though, they're getting worse. Hannibal can tell, blames it on the stress Will is under. Blames everything on the stress.

It isn't helping that the Ripper is overdue for another strike. Suspiciously overdue. It isn't like the Ripper to just stop in the middle of a sounder, and yet he has. Two bodies, then abrupt silence. Where is the third? There is *always* a third. It has everyone on edge, especially Jack.

It built in the back of his mind, chafing at his nerves and making small things feel massive. He hasn't cut the tag out of this shirt yet, it's grazing the back of his neck from time to time. He left his headphones at Hannibal's house on Sunday, hasn't made his way over to retrieve them yet. The street is more crowded than usual, someone bumps into him. An ambulance drives by. It's all just bad timing.

Either way, the next thing he knows he's sitting on the sidewalk with his back to the wall of a local cafe, shaking with tears in his eyes and a scream perched in the back of his throat. A part of him wants to release it, but he feels the familiar sensation that if he speaks, the last strands of himself will snap altogether. He curls his knees close to his chest, taking up as little space as possible. He starts to rub his wrists together, just below the heels of his palms. It's a habit he's had since he was a kid. Something, anything to ground him. His neck tics a few times in quick succession, so forcefully that it hurts. It's too bright outside. People are looking at him. He closes his eyes, tries to shut it out.

"Will Graham?"

Will wants to disappear. He knows that voice. This moment can't get any worse.

"Will? Do you need help?"

He grits his teeth. *Go away, go away, go away.*

Frederick tries to grab one of Will's hands and he flinches away, the sensation sending another wave of tics up to the base of his skull.

He hears a heavy sigh above him, the rustling of material.

"Come on, you're making a scene," Frederick says, the muffled feeling of a touch pulling him up by the shoulder of his jacket. Will forces his eyes open and sees that the other man is now wearing gloves.

He allows Chilton to lead him inside the cafe, still shaking and barely present. Frederick sets him down in a booth before taking the seat across from him. It's less crowded in here than it was on the street. Dimmer, too, and there's soft music playing that Will tries to focus on despite the few scattered conversations in the building.

"So, what's happened to poor Will this time?" Frederick asks, removing his gloves and stuffing them back into his coat pocket. "Did you finally crawl so far into the mind of a monster that you lost the way out?"

Will rolls his eyes, sets to rubbing his wrists together again. He feels a bead of sweat roll down his back and wants to skin himself to escape it. He's really not in the mood for these antics.

Chilton's smirk fades a bit. "Do you need me to have someone pick you up?" He asks.

Will sighs. He wishes he didn't, but in honesty he does. He pulls his phone from his pocket, struggles to enter his passcode and feels frustrated tears leap back to his eyes the more times

he fails.

"Calm down, Will, you're a shoo-in for Best Supporting Actress at this rate," Chilton says. "In through the nose, out through the mouth. You're fine."

Will would leave if he felt like he could stand. He follows the advice though, begrudgingly. Tries to steady himself. Opens his phone, goes to his contacts and selects one. Pushes it across the table at Chilton.

He lifts a brow. "Hannibal Lecter," he says, picking up the phone. "Of course, who better than your psychiatrist. You need me to talk to him for you?"

Will nods, staring at his hands. His wrists grind together more forcefully in frustration. He can faintly hear the dial tone as the call reaches out, forces his racing mind to focus on that sound. He locks onto Hannibal's voice as soon as traces of it drift across the table to him.

"I'm with a patient, darling. Is it urgent?"

Will flushes. Frederick raises his brows at Will, grinning. "My my Doctor Lecter, is that how you greet all of your patients? Or only Will Graham?"

Will lowers his head, letting it fall to the tabletop with a soft thud. He groans, closing his eyes tight against the dim light and Chilton's idiotic face.

"Frederick," Hannibal answers curtly. *"Is there a reason you have Will's phone?"*

"Oh yes. I found him in the midst of an...episode. He requested that I send you his way." Chilton clicks his tongue, playing at analyzing Will. "I would hurry, if I were you."

There's silence on the line for a few moments.

"...An episode? What sort of episode, is he alright?"

Will groans again, lifting his head slightly just to thunk it once more against the table. He's miserable. This moment is stirring up countless terrible memories in his already fragile brain. Memories of school teachers and camp counselors having to call his parents- that same hesitant, judgemental tone in their voice. *'Mr. Graham, it's your son. I don't know what happened, he was fine one minute, and then-'*

"Well, you know more about his mental state than I do, of course," Frederick says. "But in my professional opinion, I would guess that dear Will is having a moderate Sensory Overload Meltdown." A beat, then "Is that...normal, for him?"

I'm right here, asshole.

Will hears the rumble of Hannibal's voice, but can't make out the words. He's turned away from the phone, talking to someone else.

Rather than divulging any details about Will's condition, Hannibal simply says *"Send me your location, I'm on my way."* When he returns his attention.

A hot tear rolls down his nose. Hannibal sounds frantic, at least compared to his usual disposition. Worried. Frightened.

"I'll keep an eye on him until you get here," Chilton says, sounding unbearably smug about the situation. "We wouldn't want anything to happen to the poor thing, would we?"

Will lifts his head. He feels ready to lunge across the table and attack him, but the world is still spinning too quickly for him to strike.

"Give the phone to Will, Frederick."

"Certainly, but if I'm correct, then I believe Will is currently in a nonverbal state." He punctuates the assessment but raising a brow at Will. When Will says nothing, Chilton smirks.

Will hears a loud slam through the phone. The door to the Bentley. *He left his patient? In the middle of a session? Jesus.*

Hannibal sounds closer to outright anger than Will is used to hearing him when he speaks again.

"Just tell him I'll be there soon. And don't touch him."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Frederick replies, frowning at his nails.

"And Frederick?"

He hums in reply.

"If I find that you've done a single thing to upset him, I'll be certain you regret it."

Will feels color rush to his face at the same time that it drains from Frederick's. Hannibal sounds serious. Not just a warning, but a *threat.* It feels wrong, but it makes something shift in Will's heart. Ordinarily he hates the idea of being protected, coddled. But coming from Hannibal, well,

Will could get used to it.

Frederick stammers out some nervous goodbye that Will barely pays attention to. Hannibal is on his way. His mind tries to cling to that.

The other man stands from the booth. "Do you have a sensitivity to cold temperatures?" He asks.

Will furrows his brows in a silent question.

Frederick huffs in annoyance, speaks in a slow, condescending tone like he's speaking to a child. "You're coming down from panic, Will. You need to rehydrate. Do you want me to ask for ice in your water or not?"

Will swallows. This is...weird. The delivery of the words seem like usual Chilton, but the words themselves are kinder than Will would expect given their history.

He shakes his head, looking down to the table.

When Chilton returns a minute later with a plastic cup of cool water, Will nods at him in thanks.

"Drink it slowly. Pretty sure your little boyfriend would find an excuse to ruin me if it shocked your system."

Will grimaces. Raises his hands. It's been years since he's felt the need to do this, but his memory has always been excellent.

'You know ASL? Or are you only fluent in douchebag?'

Frederick shrugs. "Sorry, I took French in college, not sign language."

Will scowls, picks up his phone from its place on the table and opens his notes app. He types out his message and sets it back down between them.

'Why are you helping me? I've never once been nice to you.'

Frederick chuckles dryly. "I'm a psychiatrist, Will. It's my highest priority to help those in need of mental assistance."

Will almost laughs at that, quickly typing a new response beneath the first. 'Sure. Now tell the one about the prostitute and the Catholic Priest. I'm not letting you study me just because you gave me some tap water.'

He rolls his eyes when he reads the message. "Is it so unbelievable that I saw an acquaintance in obvious distress and genuinely wanted to help? We may not get along, but I'm not made of stone."

Will looks up at him. His faculties of Empathy are starting to resurface after being clouded by his meltdown. He looks pleased about the situation. Eager.

'Hannibal isn't going to give you anything, either' he insists.

Frederick smiles. "He seemed very concerned for you, didn't he? How long has that been going on?"

Will glares at him. 'You're a dick.'

He raises his hands defensively. "I'm not going to tell anyone, Will. You think I'm not sympathetic to the plights of ethically dubious gay men in this city?"

Will nods in sharp acknowledgment, somewhat relieved.

"Though it does make me wonder why you're keeping it under wraps." He smirks. "Your decision or his? I'm guessing Yours."

'I hope all of your patients escape and kill you. He signs, knowing that Frederick won't understand. *'Fuck you and fuck your stupid little hospital.'*

Frederick just laughs, completely oblivious. "Relax, I meant no offense. No need to get so...handsy with me."

Will shoves his phone back into his pocket, signaling that he's done talking. Frederick just sits back in the booth and sighs.

After a few minutes of tense silence, Frederick speaks, his voice quieter than usual.

"Drink the water, Will. You're lucky you haven't gotten a stress headache yet."

Will rolls his eyes, but he drinks.

It feels like it takes an eternity, though it's probably closer to twenty minutes, for Hannibal to appear in the doorway of the cafe. He looks upset, scanning the room until his eyes fall on Will, curled up in the booth and half-asleep. Will perks up when he notices Hannibal. The other man's face softens in an instant as a wave of palpable relief washes over him.

"Will, thank goodness you're alright."

Will musters up a small smile, practically tasting the familiar comfort of Hannibal's car. He's exhausted, he wouldn't be surprised if he passed out the moment his skull hit the headrest. Hannibal reaches out with a gentle hand but makes no move to touch him. Will takes his forearm, winces at the scratchy fabric of his suit coat, and brings himself to a standing position before attempting to wipe the sensation off on the sleeve of his own jacket.

Frederick stands, shakes Hannibal's hand with a sycophantic smile. Hannibal barely spares him a glance, eyes trained on Will.

"He should be through the worst of it now, though I would avoid any further excitement for the remainder of the day." Frederick says, despite the fact that Will is a gown man standing right in front of him.

Frederick nods to Will. "I'll see you soon."

'Fuck yourself.' Will signs.

The ghost of a smirk touches Hannibal's features as he says "Well, we should be going. Thank you for your assistance, Frederick."

As they're walking away, Will frowns up at him.

'You know ASL?'

'Some.'

Will nods, smiling to himself. Of course he does.

"Would you prefer that I sign, over speaking?" Hannibal asks gently.

Will shakes his head. He likes the sound of Hannibal's accent, lilting through his mind and warming him from the inside out.

Hannibal opens the passenger door to the Bentley and Will falls into his seat. When Hannibal joins him behind the wheel, he reaches out toward Will's curls.

"May I?" He asks.

Will nods and fingers make their way into his hair. He sighs, the sensation like a balm to his raw nerves. His eyes slip shut.

"Are you alright, dearest?" Hannibal whispers.

'Tired,' Will signs in reply. *'I haven't had a meltdown in years.'*

Hannibal continues his ministrations, lightly scratching at Will's scalp. "You can rest soon. I'll take you back to my home, you can relax there until my appointments are finished for the day. Afterwards I can take you back to Wolf Trap, if you'd like. Or you can stay with me."

Will hums softly. Hannibal's hand moves to cup his cheek. "I'll make you dinner tonight. Whatever you want. Would you like that?"

Will nods, grin tugging at his cheeks. *'You don't have to do that. I'll be okay.'*

Hannibal pulls his hand away, presses a soft kiss to his forehead before starting the car and beginning to drive home. "I know that, Will. But I care for you."

Will opens his eyes at that, looking over to him. Hannibal is focused on the road, but his voice is betraying his sincerity. He glances back at Will, expression kind and tender. He hesitates for a moment before he speaks.

" I was worried sick about you, you know."

Will shifts in his seat, enough to place a hand on Hannibal's thigh. The other man clears his throat.

"...When Frederick told me that you needed help, the only thought in my mind was that I had to come to you as quickly as possible. I cut an appointment with a patient short- not only for your benefit but for my own as well. Every moment until I saw with my own eyes that you were alright was filled with dread."

Will feels himself blushing at the sentiment, vulnerable and soft. He swallows hard.

"What did you tell your patient?" Will says, voice small in the quiet of the car. It feels strange, almost wrong, to be speaking again.

Hannibal smiles to himself. "I simply told her that someone very dear to me was in need of assistance. She understood, don't trouble yourself with it."

Will nods, watching storefronts and pedestrians roll by and trying to ignore the wild flutter in his chest. *Dear to him. Very. I like the sound of that.*

"Did you have meltdowns often when you were younger?"

Will nods again. "I was a 'difficult child'." He says, leaning back against the headrest and closing his eyes once more. "Haven't had one since I was a cop, though. Especially not one that knocked me on my ass like that."

Hannibal seems to think this over. "Is that why you learned to sign? So you could communicate in a nonverbal state when your sensory overload necessitated it?"

"More or less," he admits. "Been a long time, though. I'm surprised I still remember it. But I guess I used it a lot, back then."

"How much is a lot, exactly?"

He sighs. "I didn't really talk much, in college. The stress got to me, you know? And even when I did talk, I usually uh, still signed at the same time. Gave me something to do with my hands."

Hannibal doesn't respond.

"Is that weird?"

"No, darling. I'm just concerned, that's all."

"I'll be fine. I just need a nap. Maybe a hot bath. And something with cheese in it, I think. You can manage that, can't you?" He chuckles, waits for Hannibal to laugh too. He doesn't.

"Are you going to take tomorrow off to rest?"

"You can spoil me tonight, right? I'll be fine to work tomorrow."

Hannibal sighs heavily. "Will-"

"I can't just take the day off, you know that."

"Have you even allowed yourself to consider that this meltdown is a sign that you need to stop consulting?"

Will frowns, crossing his arms across his chest protectively. "It was just bad timing."

Irritation is beginning to color the edges of Hannibal's voice. "You said yourself that you haven't had an episode like this in quite some time, you don't think it's alarming for it to reappear so suddenly?"

"Maybe I was overdue," He answers.

A tense quiet forms, threatening to choke them both. It isn't long before Hannibal breaks it.

"I only worry so much because I know how detrimental your environment is, Will. You can Empathize with that, can you not?"

Will rubs at his closed eyes. "I don't want to talk about this right now, okay? I'm tired."

Hannibal sighs in defeat. "Of course. Rest now, then. You are safe with me."

Hannibal continues to drive. The sound of the car and the world whizzing by is grounding. It isn't long before Will is drifting off.

When he wakes, it's several hours later. He's lying in Hannibal's bed. His shoes, socks, belt and jacket have been removed and set aside. There's a note on the bedside table, in Hannibal's signature script.

'I didn't have the heart to wake you when you were sleeping so soundly. Please feel free to make yourself comfortable. What is mine is yours.
Rest. Relax- for once. Please. Contact me if you need anything.
-H'

Will smiles, setting the note aside before rising to run himself a bath.

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Will shivers. The water in his shower is turned as far toward 'hot' as it can go, but there isn't any warmth left. Just the cold spray all around him. He washes his hands again. He still feels it.

He never has trouble slipping into killers' heads. He's been slipping further and further, over time. Yesterday, he slipped a bit to far. Simple as that. A small accident. Just a slip.

The feeling of warm blood washing over his palms won't leave him, no matter what he does. The coppery scent mixing with that innocent girl's lavender shampoo clings to his brain as stubbornly as if it was Will's own- a memory he created rather than one he stole.

Jack sent him home early. It wasn't like Will would've been able to consult in this state to begin with. He'd come out of the killer's head shaking from head to toe, gasping for air in a blind panic. He didn't remember much between waking up and being in the shower. Little flashes. Beverly's voice shouting *'Nobody touch him!'* and cutting through the small commotion. Alana whispering *'Easy, Will'* and wrapping something around his shoulders. A coat, maybe, or a blanket. Sitting in an unfamiliar car, Bev speaking but Will not able to register her words. Seeing a deer on the side of the road. Bev telling him to stop rubbing his hands together before they end up raw. Asking if he needed her to stay. Sitting on the floor and petting his dogs in silence.

He turns off the shower, quickly toweling off before throwing on some sweatpants and a T-shirt. He's about to go searching for a sweater when he sees headlights approaching. It's dark

outside. That doesn't add up.

He steps outside and Hannibal is already halfway across the yard to meet him.

Will frowns. "We weren't supposed to meet tonight, were we?"

Hannibal looks caught between exasperation and elation. "You haven't been answering your phone, darling. I was frightened for you."

"That's a bit of an overreaction, don't you think? I just had a rough day at work, that's all."

"I called Alana, Will."

Will feels defensive anger flare up at that. "You did *what?* Han, you don't need to start stalking me every time I don't pick up your calls," He says, though it feels like it shouldn't need saying.

"Evidently I do!" Hannibal counters. "Were you planning on telling me that you had another episode at work?"

"I don't know! Maybe, if you'd given me some time to think first!" He sighs sharply. "It doesn't matter, alright? I'm fine. Don't worry about it."

Hannibal practically rolls his eyes at that. "You can't possibly expect me to ignore this. You had the last meltdown- what, three weeks ago? Your health is deteriorating before my very eyes, and you want me to just sit idly by and allow you to destroy yourself?"

Will groans, buries his face in his hands. "I'm not having this argument with you again. I'm serious." They've been talking in circles about this for what felt like ages, but it's been gaining frequency since Will's last episode. If he hears those five fucking words one more time-

"I think you should quit," Hannibal says.

He grits his teeth. He's tired. He's freezing. He's not doing this right now. "Go home, Hannibal. I'll call you tomorrow, okay?"

"You know that I'm right, Will. This work is killing you, you can't sustain this."

"And what do you want me to do, then?" Will says, voice rising. "You want me to go back to teaching and let people die? Go to bed every night with blood on my hands? Nobody does this as well as I do. I can't just stop."

"I don't care about them," Hannibal says.

Will frowns up at him. He opens his mouth to argue back but Hannibal cuts him off.

"No number of lives saved will ever be enough to justify your destruction, dearest. Not to me. I couldn't bare it if something happened to you, no matter the circumstances."

Despite himself, Will softens a fraction. "I'm not destroying myself, Han. I'll be okay. You know I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I stopped, I'd go mad."

Hannibal frowns at him. Without a word, he pulls his sweater over his head, leaving him in only a thin undershirt. He holds it out to Will.

"You're shaking, mylimasis. Not to mention you're soaking wet. I'd hate for you to catch a cold."

Will huffs in annoyance. He's freezing- barefoot and inadequately dressed in the night air. Still, taking the sweater feels like a surrender. He looks at Hannibal and the other man simply smiles innocently.

He snatches the sweater from his hands. Will likes it when Hannibal wears this sweater. It's soft and warm, Will wonders if he wore it intentionally when he came over. He pulls it on, letting the sleeves fall to rest partially over his hands and make him feel small. He takes a deep breath. Hannibal's scent wafts up from the collar to meet him and he sighs to himself. It's a soothing presence, despite the current situation.

"Will you at least consider taking a brief vacation?" Hannibal asks gently. "I have a property on the coast. It's secluded, with a beautiful view. We could hide away together there for a long weekend. You would only need to miss a day or two of work, and I could spend a few days pampering you."

Will lets a small smile rise to his face. "That sounds...I'm not gonna lie, that sounds really nice. If it's only for a few days, maybe that would be okay."

Hannibal looks pleased. Far too pleased, actually. It's suspicious. "Excellent, simply name the day and I will take you."

Will narrows his eyes. Observing Hannibal. Empathizing. He scowls.

"I'm not letting you take me on a trip just so you can spend the whole time convincing me to quit, Hannibal."

He sees no point in trying to lie, at least. They know each other too well for that. "I simply think the distance from work may give you some much-needed perspective. Help you think more clearly."

Will shakes his head, anger resurging easily. "Why are you so obsessed with knowing what's best for me?"

"Because I *do* know what's best for you, Will!" He says, frustrations finally coming to a head and straining his voice as he closes the space between them. "I cannot just disregard my years of expertise. You are suffering, and I am able to help, if you would only stop being so stubborn and allow me to!"

He gasps when Hannibal grabs a rough fistful of the sweater, yanking at the fabric on the center of Will's chest.

"Damn it, Will, can't you see that I-"

Will's breath catches in his throat. His eyes go wide. He waits, not sure what he'll do if he says-

Hannibal takes a slow breath, hesitating before he speaks. "I...care for you. Deeply. And I want you to feel better." He slowly unfurls his fist, releasing the sweater. "Can't you see that?"

Will steps back, reclaiming some space. He doesn't feel cold anymore. The rush of fury rising across his skin has made quick work of that.

You can't keep having it both ways, Hannibal. You can't ask me to quit my job and then pull something like that. If you're doing this because you love me then say so. If you want to be the only one on my list then say so. Give up. Give in. Give me ***something.*** *I'm in control, I'm in control. If I'm in control, then give me some fucking power, for* ***once.*** *Say you love me. Say it first. Say it slow. Say it like you think I won't say it back.*

"You're not my fucking therapist anymore," He spits instead, taking another step backwards toward the house. "Stop acting like it. I'm not quitting my job. If you can't handle that, then go."

Hannibal's face goes dark. It's frightening. Will tries to stand his ground. After a tense moment, the other man laughs. It's a cold chuckle that chills his blood.

"You know Will, I'm beginning to think that you *are* Icarus, after all. But the sun you are chasing will not mourn you when you burn for it."

Will looks down at the porch. That stung. He tries to think of a response, but he comes up short.

"I can't do this with you anymore, Hannibal. I'm tried. I think...I think I'm done. I'm finished."

Hannibal's voice has changed entirely when it reaches him. It's small, uncertain. All anger leached from it.

"Finished...finished with what, exactly?"

Will blows out a long breath. "I don't know. I don't think I'm in the right headspace to be making those kinds of calls." He looks up at him. "Give me some space, alright? I need to think. We can talk in a couple days."

Hannibal nods. He looks hurt. When he speaks again, it's filtered through that old professional veneer. Guarded. Clinical. "If that's what you need, then I'll be waiting to hear from you."

They exchange an awkward farewell and Will watches Hannibal drive away. It isn't until he's lying down to get some much-needed sleep that he realizes he's still wearing Hannibal's sweater. It's soft. Warm. Familiar. He curls up in bed, hands half-hidden by the red material, and falls asleep.

-

It's about a week later when Will finally surrenders and reaches out. It's via text, he can't handle hearing that voice. Will asks him to meet up in a restaurant near Baltimore. Somewhere public, where Hannibal can't make a scene, if it comes to that.

Will still isn't entirely decided, even as he sits at the table and waits for Hannibal to arrive. He's still deliberating, fiddling with the sleeves of the red sweater. He knows how it'll look, how the other man will feel seeing Will still wearing his clothes, but he can't make himself care.

It's embarrassing, but the stupid sweater has quickly become a comfort item for him. It's just so soft, and Hannibal's broad frame has stretched it just enough that it doesn't constrict Will but isn't baggy. Close but not suffocating. Like an embrace.

While Will himself is still undecided on how to resolve this fight, his body has very strong opinions on the matter. He knew he'd become accustomed to Hannibal's touch, but it's only now that he understands how maddeningly dependent he's become on relief for his Touch Starvation. Hannibal squeezing his hand, playing with his hair, kissing his cheeks. Hannibal knowing from months of practice to avoid Will's feet and ears altogether, and which places are okay to touch but not to kiss, and the exact ways to *overwhelm* him without *overstimulating* him.

He knows things Will would never share with a single soul. Textures and sounds and sensations that make him uncomfortable, things he would ordinarily just grin and bear. But Hannibal has always wanted to know, to help. It's only been a week, but Will misses him.

In short, he's fucked.

Hannibal smiles gently when he sees Will, and as predicted, his eyes flick down to the red sleeves bunching around his arms and the smiles grows a bit. Will averts his eyes, takes a sip of coffee.

"Hello, Will,"

And when he hears that voice, he's decided.

"Hey."

Hannibal sits across from him, looking around the mostly empty restaurant. It's early, they're ahead of the lunch rush. By design.

"How are you?" Hannibal asks, sounding as awkward as Will feels.

He chuckles dryly. "You've never needed to ask."

Hannibal's smile fades. "No, I haven't. You look tired."

Will reluctantly nods, taking another drink. "So do you."

"I've had a lot on my mind," Hannibal replies.

"Me too." He looks up to Hannibal, sees the undercurrent of worry in his deep brown eyes. "I've been trying to brace myself. For this."

Hannibal's brows furrow. "And what is 'this', by your estimation?"

Will chews the inside of his cheek, stares down at his sleeves. He tugs at them restlessly, fidgeting in his seat.

"It's not a breakup," He says at last. Then, quietly, he adds "If you don't want it to be."

"I'm relieved to hear that," Hannibal says, and the feeling is evident in his voice. His hand comes to rest on Will's side of the table, palm up. "...May I, Will?"

Will looks up at him and allows himself to smile. He reaches out and takes Hannibal's hand in his own, palms coming flush and fingers threading together. He sighs at the warmth. It's grounding, as it's always been, but more than that it makes him feel wanted.

"I like what we have," Will says. "I want to stay together. This relationship is the best thing that's happened to me in a long time, I don't want to just walk away."

Hannibal smiles back and runs his thumb across Will's knuckles. It feels so entirely *right.* Safe.

"But I'm not quitting my job."

To his credit, his expression only falters for a moment before he nods in acquiescence. "I understand. And I apologize. You were right, I was treating you as I would a patient. It's just challenging, to let go. Especially on matters pertaining to mental health. It is coming from a place of affection, though. Even if it can come across as...insistent."

Will laughs. "More like nagging," he says. He swallows, face flushing a bit. "But, I know that it's just because you care."

He squeezes Hannibal's hand. "So are we okay? Can we go back to just arguing about whose house we're staying in tonight?"

Hannibal lifts their joined hands and presses a soft kiss to Will's knuckles. "Of course, love. And I'll do whatever I can to help you manage your stress at work, if that's truly what you think is best for your wellbeing."

Will nods, sighs both in relief and exhaustion. "I've been thinking about taking you up on that vacation, you know. They'll survive without me for a few days, It's been ages since I took a proper break."

"Well, my home on the coast is certainly convenient for a quick escape," Hannibal says, a smirk rising to his lips. "But if you'd be willing to ask for more time, I could take you on a real vacation."

Will lifts a brow.

"How would you feel about a week in Buenos Aries?"

He almost chokes. "Y-you- Han, you can't be serious."

"I'm entirely serious, darling. If I must allow you to maintain this bleak lifestyle, then at least let me act as the counterpoint to it. A week in the sun, to balance out the darkness. That's all I ask."

Will's heart flutters. He couldn't hide his grin if he tried. "You need to be careful, Doctor Lecter," He teases. "If there's one thing that you've taught me, it's that I get used to good things far too quickly. I might come to expect it."

"I hope you do," Hannibal replies, kissing the back of Will's hand again. "I'd be more than happy to give you every good thing you desire. You need only say the word."

Hannibal swallows, makes eyes contact with Will. His eyes are sparkling with warm affection.

"...I love you, Will."

Will feels tears rising to his eyes, immediately trying to blink them away. His face is starting to ache from smiling. The weight of Hannibal's hand is holding him down to Earth, keeping him from flying away.

"I love you, too."

-

Will's phone buzzes on the bedside table, harsh melodic ring tone cutting through the growing symphony of sighs and soft moans in their hotel room. Will glances at it, barely registering that the screen has lit up before his eyes are slipping closed again. Hannibal's mouth latches onto his neck, sucking at his heated flesh. Will groans in the back of his throat, hips shifting impatiently against the other man.

His phone rings again.

Will pushes himself up on his hands, looking at the contact name.

"Will," Hannibal calls softly.

"It's Jack."

A set of long, skilled fingers rise to tangle into his curls, urging him back down to the bed. "He will survive without you, my love. We had a deal- for this week, your attention belongs to me."

Will laughs, allowing himself to be pulled into a passionate kiss.

It rings a third time. Will pulls away and reaches for the phone.

"It's probably important," He says.

He's met with a sound of protest from Hannibal. He runs his hands along the length of Will's back, nails just barely pressing in. "And if it is then he can leave a voice-mail for you."

Will sighs, lashes fluttering at the touch. The ring tone pulls him back to Earth despite Hannibal's insistence.

"Five minutes," he says. "Five minutes, and I promise I'll make it worth the wait."

He answers the call, clambering up from his place between Hannibal's legs.

"Will," Hannibal groans, falling back against the pillows in defeat. He watches as Will throws on a dark blue robe, holding the phone to his ear.

"I told you not to call me unless it was urgent, Jack," Will says, stepping through the sliding glass door that leads from their bedroom to the balcony. He leaves the door open behind him, hoping the sea air will drift into the suite and soothe Hannibal's annoyance.

"Will, how's your vacation going?"

"That doesn't sound urgent."

Jack huffs. "I need you to cut it short."

"Not gonna happen."

"Eight people are dead."

Will freezes. "...You have other people who can help, Jack," He says, mostly trying to convince himself. "Talented agents. They can catch whoever it is, that's what you hired them for."

"Not as quickly as you can. And every minute we waste is another minute he could kill again."

He sighs. He feels trapped. "I can't come back to Quantico right now, Jack."

"Why not? Where are you?"

Will leans on the balcony railing, looking out at the crystal sea as it laps up to the beach below him. "Argentina," he mumbles.

"Argentina? Since when do you travel abroad?"

Will shrugs. "I'm trying some new things, I guess. Leaving my comfort zone."

Jack curses under his breath. "Will, you're my best profiler. I can't have you just going AWOL whenever you feel like it."

Will bristles. "You don't control me, Jack."

"No. If I did, you'd be here saving lives instead of being off doing God knows what in South America. If I send you the crime scene photos, can you at least try to give me some answers?"

He drags a palm along his face. "I'm supposed to be taking a break from getting stuck in killers' heads. It's not good for me to be thinking about work all the time."

"Well, I'd hate to inconvenience you," Jack sneers. "You need to focus, Will. You can't start slipping now, not when the Ripper's due to strike again any day."

"If he strikes again," Will says.

Jack pauses for a beat. "What do you mean?"

Will shrugs. "I don't know. The sounders are always three kills in quick succession. It's been months now since the last Ripper victim. He just...stopped."

He turns, putting his back to the sea. Looks back into their hotel room. Hannibal is lying against the mattress, eyes closed and face peaceful with an arm draped lazily above his head. Will can almost imagine him purring, the ocean breeze wafting in to disturb the loose hair falling in his face. It's clear that the other man is having an effect on him, because Will finds himself reminded of Cabanel's Venus, resting on the crest of a coming wave.

"I just can't shake this feeling, lately. Every time I think about him. That maybe he's done Ripping for a while. Maybe I just want him to be."

"...Is this a hunch or are you confident about it?"

"I'm not sure. I feel like we aren't going to hear from him again any time soon, that's all I know. Maybe he'll keep killing, but it won't be as the Ripper."

"If he stops Ripping we'll never catch him. You do realize that, don't you?"

Will runs a frustrated hand through his hair, falling into one of the chairs on their balcony. "Fine by me if it means I never have to get lost in his head again."

Anger is starting to seep into Jack's voice and leak through the phone. It spurs Will on. "So you don't care about him getting away with all the atrocities he committed?"

"I care," Will spits. "I'm just not obsessed with catching him even if it kills me. I have a life outside of this job, you know. I can't just drive myself mad to feed your Ahab complex."

A gentle hand comes to rest on Will's shoulder. "Just a sec," Will says, forcing his voice to soften.

Jack sounds confused when he speaks again. "Is there someone with you?"

"Your five minutes have passed, Will," Hannibal says, grabbing his free hand and gently taking it in his own.

"Is that...Doctor Lecter? What the hell is going on?"

Hannibal presses a kiss to Will's hand before trailing along his fingertips and finally taking two of his fingers into his mouth. Will tenses as Hannibal sucks on them, tongue curling around his knuckles.

"I don't want to hear from you again until I get back." Wil says into the phone. "If none of your dozens of agents can make any headway by the time I get back, I'll help. Until then, you're on your own."

"But Will-"

"Don't. Call me. Again."

Will hangs up and stands, pulling Hannibal into a heated embrace and quickly replacing his fingers with his own tongue as they kiss fiercely.

"You should be grateful, for this moment only, that there is so much man-made waste in our oceans," Hannibal says.

Will laughs, grabbing a handful of Hannibal's still-exposed ass. "And why's that, darlin'?"

Hannibal smirks, gripping his jaw and kissing him again. "Because the moral obligation to not contribute is the only thing keeping me from throwing that infernal device over the balcony and into the water."

Will chuckles in response, letting his hands roam along Hannibal's waist.

"Come back to bed," Hannibal says, thumb moving to trace Will's lower lip.

Will hums. "I did say I'd make it worth the wait, didn't I?"

Hannibal answers by kissing him again, softly moaning against his lips. He pulls at Will's robe, urging him closer. Will obliges, letting Hannibal grab him tightly. He laughs around an exclamation of 'Han!' as Hannibal hoists him up and carries him to the bed, dropping him in the center of their mattress. The other man falls to loom above him, smiling wickedly.

"Beautiful," he murmurs, and Will grins.

"You're whipped."

"Maybe so, but I prefer being somewhat codependent over being without you."

Hannibal begins to pepper kisses along Will's neck and jaw, and Will laughs at the tickling sensation of Hannibal's slight stubble. He folds his arms around the other man with a contented sigh.

"Me too."

End Notes

Do you have a Hannigram idea, but don't like to write? Maybe it's something you've seen before but can't get enough of. Drop any prompts in my comment sections or contact me on Tumblr under the same screen name, I might make your request into a fic and credit you!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!